
English Rule in India and India's Unrest

Author(s): S. Bharmachari

Source: *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Oct., 1910), pp. 209-220

Published by:

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29737858>

Accessed: 15/07/2014 09:37

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



<http://www.jstor.org>

ENGLISH RULE IN INDIA AND INDIA'S UNREST.

By S. Bharmachari, Assistant Secretary of the Social Democratic Party of India, and recently Editor of Jugantar, an Indian Nationalist Journal.

An Address delivered at Clark University during the Conference upon the Far East.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—I thank you for the privilege of addressing this American audience, and through it the whole American people, in regard to a country whose past contributed much to human progress and civilization and the solution of whose present problems would bring peace and prosperity to many millions.

The present political problem of India is unique. To a foreigner it may seem strange that a country which has been the nursery of arms and arts, and the cradle of civilization, well reputed for its fabulous wealth and splendor, should now be converted into an abode of constant famine and plague.

To a student of history, the achievements of ancient India are not unknown. Fifteen hundred years before London was heard of, India was noted for its ship-building industry. A thousand years and more before the birth of Christ, aërial navigation was understood by the Hindoos, and balloons were commonly used in warfare. In chemistry, astronomy and medical science, the nation made stupendous progress long before civilization dawned in Greece; and in religion and philosophy it is still unsurpassed and is regarded as the undisputed fountain head of all psychical, metaphysical and spiritual knowledge.

In the seventeenth century India was deemed by Sir John Shore to be the most prosperous country of the world, and Frederick List says in his "National System of Political Economy": "Had they sanctioned free importation into

England of Indian goods, the English manufactories would have come to an end." How is it, then, that in the one hundred and fifty years of British rule India has been converted into an agricultural country, and over eighty millions of people, more than double the population of England, have died in starvation?

The answer is not far to seek. It has been calculated by the British economists that between Plassey and Waterloo there was an influx of money to England from India of from \$2,500,000,000 to \$5,000,000,000 and in the closing twenty-five years of the nineteenth century \$2,500,000,000 (*Westminster Gazette*, April 24, 1908). Can any nation withstand this heavy drainage without feeling exhaustion in all spheres of her national life? More than this, India is to pay to England annually a sum of \$150,000,000, for which she gets no return.

An unrepresented nation is thus sacrificed to the interest of England. It can not be otherwise, when a bureaucratic administration has been thrust upon an unwilling people, who have no voice whatsoever in the affairs of their country and in the control of its finance. England wishes India to be ruled for her benefit, and uses every means, whether fair or foul, to bring it about. This explains why it is that India has been so undermined, her commerce and industry ruined and her people impoverished. England's best interest lies in India; loss of India, Lord Curzon truly said, would be the setting sun of British glory. India has given England unbounded wealth; it is this which has made her what she is today. India supplies her the raw materials which she uses in her manufacturing. India affords her the golden opportunity to send forth her children to be trained in military science and in civil administration. At the cost of India, England sends expeditions for her own territorial aggrandizement to Tibet, Sudan, and Transvaal.

From the point of view of British interests, this coercive administration might be justified, but the fact is, for half a century England has been trying to convey to the civilized world the impression that it is in the best interest

of India and of humanity that she has condescended to take up the huge responsibility of Indian administration; that she has restored peace and order; and that if she should withdraw her power today, there would be chaos and confusion tomorrow. India would then, she represents, be again deluged in blood, brother would fight against brother, one sect against another, until Russia would come and conquer the country when, too late, the Hindoos would realize what a blessing had been the British rule.

If peace means the silent and slow process of death, then England has given plenty of it to India. Hyderman has shown that more than eighty millions of people have died in the course of British rule in India and William Digby has proved by statistics that "more than half the population do not know what it is to get a full meal from one year's end to another. More than nine millions of people do not get more than a meal a day." The average annual income of an Indian is only \$12, out of which he has to pay \$5.50 in the shape of various taxes, such as land tax, water tax, police tax, income tax, road tax and many others, even salt tax not being omitted. All this is not due to the fact that the land is not productive: on the contrary, one year's crop is sufficient to feed the whole nation for six years, provided it is not exported. If in one district the crops have failed, in others they have always been abundant. In the years when there are partial failures of crops, millions are starved to death. This, however, is not due to the scarcity of grain but of money, of which the people have been robbed to their last farthing by the British administration.

In all countries, as a rule, the government encourages and fosters home industry, but in India it is different. All obstacles are thrust in the way of its progress. All home-made goods are taxed heavily so that they may not compete with the imports on which the duty is almost nominal. Government servants, engineers and contractors are advised by their higher officials to use English manufactures; if they do not do so, they are dropped from the service. Those who take any active part in the industrial progress of the country are harrassed by the government in their

every step. This is why capitalists do not often dare to invest their money in any industrial speculation since they may thereby incur the displeasure of the ruling power. It is industry that supports and enriches a nation; but in India industry has been killed in the selfish interest of Britain.

The next thing that England boasts of is the order she has brought into India. Of course, railways and telegraphs have been introduced; but this has been due to the influence of the civilization of the twentieth century, not to that of any particular government. Moreover, railways and telegraphs are necessary for the military operations of the British administration. Without their introduction no alien government could possibly exist today in such a vast country as India. No doubt the people derive a great benefit from them, but their primary use is military and political.

Schools and colleges indeed have been opened where occidental education is imparted; but taking into consideration the vastness of the country and the immensity of the population, they are very few and limited. The government does not spend more than a cent per head annually on education. Out of the annual revenue of \$360,000,000 not more than \$4,500,000 are spent for education while \$115,000,000 are spent for military purposes. There is not a single college for any technical training, or for any higher branch of science; the universities are merely huge machines to manufacture stereotyped lawyers and clerks. For the spread of higher education national schools, colleges and universities have been started by the zeal and enthusiasm of patriotic young men, but the government is trying to throw as many obstacles in their way as possible, being under the impression that these institutions are hotbeds of sedition.

Almost all offices of responsibility are occupied by Englishmen. One hundred and five positions, each paying annually \$3334 or over, are held by Englishmen. Among the officers who are paid from \$1667 to \$3334 there are 441 natives in the civil departments against 1207 British and 96 Eurasians. In the military department 25 natives are employed against 1699 British and 22 Eurasians. Even in the dark days of the Mohammedan rule the chief offices

were almost entirely occupied by the Hindoos. In the time of Akbar, almost all the ministers of state were Hindoos, and the commander-in-chief was a Hindoo Prince. Without going further into details it is not too much to say that British rule is no better than the Russian. In Russia there is a bureaucratic government, to be sure, but the national wealth is not drained off to foreign countries: it is accumulated and utilized for the social, industrial and military progress of the nation, and the children of the country are the rulers of the land.

The last of England's arguments is that in case she should withdraw her power from India, the country would be no better off than it is today. But can England really withdraw or grant complete self-government to India? Is there any Englishman who dares to make this proposal before the British Cabinet? There may be a few who have been struggling to induce the British Parliament to democratise the autocracy in India, not because India ought to be free, but because if substantial reforms should be granted agitation might cease, discontent be appeased and England be permitted to rule India longer and enrich herself further thereby.

It is claimed that there are so many languages, castes and creeds in India that they are opposed to the realization of the political unity of the country. But is this really so? Religious fanaticism, caste and creed no longer play an important part in shaping the destiny of a nation. Everywhere, in every land, religious fanaticism has cooled down and sober judgment has taken its place. In India, especially, toleration has been the foundation of its religious life. India has fought scarcely any wars for the supremacy of religion, while for centuries Europe has been again and again deluged with blood in religious contests. It is a common aim and a common interest that make people into a united nation, not their caste, their creed or their color, or the geographical barrier of high mountains and broad rivers which surround them.

Every native of India, whether Hindoo, Mohammedan, or Jain, whether literate or illiterate, feels equally the string

of slavery, the arrogance of John Bull's race, feels that his country is tramped underfoot in the interest of England. It is this which makes all India one and united.

The British rule in India, however, has not been an un-mixed evil. The great organizing capacity, the commercial instinct and acute business ability, the undaunted courage and persevering zeal of the sturdy race of Britain has taught India a great deal and infused a new impulse into her national movements. The network of railways and telegraph lines has brought into close contact the far distant districts of this vast country. The English language has fulfilled a great mission. It has been the *lingua franca* of the cultured society and has made it possible for the people of different provinces to meet on the same platform to discuss the events of the day. It has brought India into closer union with the western world. Young India has learned, with enthusiastic eagerness, the systems of political institutions of Europe, of America, and the secret of their success. Hundreds of young men go abroad annually to study; they come back to their country inspired by a new vision of life, new hopes and aspirations; but when they return to their native soil they find that political slavery is their only lot.

After the proclamation of Queen Victoria, the cultured classes were under the impression that it is the unworthy representatives of Britain who are responsible for the mal-administration of the country, and that if the British people could be convinced of their injustice and if India could prove her fitness and unity, she would be given a representative government of her own. To protest against the abuses and and the injustice of the British administration, the Indian National Congress was inaugurated in 1887; seventeen resolutions were unanimously passed by the assembled delegates who represented all castes and creeds of the country. Since then this Congress has met annually, but very recently has been suppressed by the government. Since 1887 it has sent scores of deputations to the British Parliament, with long petitions, signed by millions of the people, protesting vehemently against the nonfulfilment of the pledges England has given to her again and again.

But political agitation did not take any serious shape until the partition of Bengal was proclaimed in 1905—the greatest political blunder Britain ever committed in India. It was the defying of the unanimous public opinion of the whole nation. The leaders of the congress were stupified at this mistaken policy of the government, but they could not devise any means to nullify its effect. The whole nation, however, was agitated; and patriotic young politicians organised a boycott of British goods. Its effect was far reaching; like wild fire it spread over the country and finally took up a militant shape. Hundreds of students left the university and began to preach and organize native volunteers. British goods were heaped together and were put to the flames. From the pulpit and from the press the message of liberty and freedom began to spread from city to city and province to province, arousing the whole nation to feverish activity. The government being alarmed at the progress of the movement wanted to suppress it at any cost, so persecution followed. Nearly one hundred and twenty were arrested in the course of a few months, many of whom were sentenced to rigorous imprisonments, varying from six months to two years.

Many of these young men were of scholarly attainments, of whom any nation would have been proud, but the government would not tolerate the freedom of their speech and was indifferent to their patriotic zeal. Almost all newspapers with nationalistic sentiments were gagged, but nothing could suppress these organs as long as the presses were not confiscated. The “Jugantar,” a very popular organ of Indian nationalism, had seven of its editors sent to jail in the course of a year. Its first editor, Mr. B. Dutta, when arrested, did not like to undertake the legal technicalities of any defence. He said in the open court that whenever the government conspires to punish a man, whether he is guilty or not, he is sure to be convicted; why, then, uselessly waste money and energy? In his statement he boldly said that he did whatever he could in the best interest of his country and was prepared for the consequences. He received his conviction with a smile, and his example was

soon followed by Mr. B. Upadaya, the editor of "Sandya," a leading nationalist daily, who said; "I do not acknowledge the right of England to rule over India, nor do I acknowledge any law, which is not framed by the people for the benefit of the people. I have served my country and my God, for which I am not to be held responsible to an alien bureaucrat." Very soon he died in prison, before the trial was finished. These examples inspired the whole nation and the prison soon lost its terror.

The government became very nervous at the rapidity with which the officials were losing their prestige with the common people, so to regain it they planned a game which took away the last faith the people had in the British administration. The lowest class Mohammedan hooligans were hired by the local government of Eastern Bengal, of which Sir B. F. Fuller was the head. At a time when almost all men were at a neighboring fair, they pounced upon Jamalpour, a small town of Bengal, looted the property, set houses on fire, and, most revolting of all, violated the sanctity of Hindoo homes. Many of these defenceless women subsequently committed suicide rather than live an ignoble life. The policy of the government was to show to the world that the Hindoos are defenceless if British power is withdrawn. But the effect was quite the contrary. Thousands of young men took up their march towards the place where the outrage occurred, and when the police interfered there was a regular fight. The military post opened fire upon the unarmed people, but after a two hours' struggle the soldiers surrendered and the whole town was in the hands of the revolutionists for a week.

This was an object lesson for both the people and the government. The people thought that it was at last time for them to organise military forces, so societies sprang up and military drills were almost openly held in defiance of the authorities. Three societies especially took a very prominent part in this matter. Anushilon enlisted more than ninety thousand volunteers; Brati Society, fifty thousand; and Shavak Society, thirty thousand. But these could not proceed unchecked. Very soon the authorities tried to

suppress the movement by every means. All Eastern Bengal was declared under martial law and no meeting could be held without the express permission of the police superintendent. Not more than eighteen men were permitted to meet together; no one could carry a stick in his hands: private houses were raided at night; spies and detectives were everywhere. No public spirited man was safe from sudden arrest; unexpectedly his house is raided, he is seized and handcuffed and taken to a dark dungeon, where he is subjected to humiliations and to tortures. There he must stay in solitary confinement for a quarter of a year, or even more if needs be for the completion of the investigation, after which begins the lingering trial. It goes on month after month and at the end of a year or so, when his energy is gone and he is perhaps an invalid for the rest of his life, he is discharged since no case can be proven against him.

This is what India was two years ago; since that time the situation has not improved, and has rather been getting worse day by day.

Nearly eighteen months ago, the colonization bill was passed in the Punjab and the whole of upper India was agitated. When the Indian leaders were arrested, meetings were organized to show sympathy with them, but as these were dispersed by the military forces, the English quarter of Rawlpindi—a strong military centre of the northwestern frontier—was set on fire in retaliation. The magistracy building, the police station and the court house were all ablaze and the English had to fly for their lives. When the Indian cavalry was ordered to charge the crowd, they shot in the air. The government, understanding the seriousness of the position, since the Punjab is the home of the Shiks, the flowers of the British army, made a compromise by withdrawing the bill. When peace was restored, nearly ninety arrests were made in Rawlpindi, including influential lawyers and merchants, many of whom died in prison; but after a protracted trial which lasted for a year, all but about half a dozen were released, since nothing could be proven against them. At Lahore, Sardor Agit Singh and Lajpat Roy were invited to the government house, and were there

arrested and sent to Mandalaya forts, nearly two thousand miles off, to be kept in solitary imprisonment, without any charge, public or private, being preferred against them.

It was in these times of excitement, when all public meetings were suppressed, the presses confiscated, the pulpits forbidden, that the Society of Brotherhood was formed. It was the logical outcome of oppression. It preached through clandestine presses that in a subjugated country, there is no other means of action but through secret societies and guerilla warfare. The moderates who believed in constitutional agitation had become disappointed. Many of them had now given up politics and were devoting themselves to the task of improving the industry and education of the nation, yet these were learning by bitter experience that political freedom is the first condition of growth in any sphere of national activity. The passive resisters, boycotters and the labour unionists cherished the belief that if the nation could be so organized that the British would get no help from the natives—if no one would enter the police or the army or any kind of government service—England would then be compelled to abandon India. They have now, however, come to realize that no such organization is possible, for many of the leaders are confined in British prisons—some for ten, fifteen or twenty years; while the fortunate ones who could escape are wandering in foreign countries. There is no power in this vast world to which an Indian Patriot may appeal for protection, except to his own strength.

You have heard of the impartial British Courts of Justice. They are impartial, as a rule, but in political state trials, they are a mockery of justice. The man who orders the arrest of a patriot is the very same man who signs his death warrant. The executive functions and the judicial duties are embodied in some inexperienced officer who is the master of 1,500,000 souls. It has been found out in the Alipur and Midnapur bomb cases that the police forged documents, and bribed men to make implicating confessions and to give false evidence. Often the Judge does not abide by the decision of the jury. In the case of Mr. Tilak, the great Mahratta leader, out of nine jurors, two were against him,

but these were both Englishmen; the remaining seven, who were all natives, declared that he was not guilty of sedition for which he was being tried—but with all that he was convicted and sentenced to nine years' rigorous imprisonment. In case of Satyendra Basu, who was tried for conspiracy in the murder of Narendra Gossain, out of three jurors, two gave their verdict in favour of Mr. Basu and the other expressed the belief that he should be given the favour of a doubt—but he was hanged, and the last honour to the dead, the religious ritual, was not even permitted. But the privilege of a trial is not given to all. Nine men of position and prominence in Bengal have been recently arrested and kept in different prisons of India in solitary confinement: yet many of them took no part in the political agitation. These nine are:

1. Mr. A. Dutta, an educator, a professor of Brojmohon College, one of the greatest centres of occidental education in India.

2. Mr. K. Mitra, a prominent professor in the city-college, Calcutta.

3. Mr. P. Dutta, the president of a prominent physical culture association, Dacca.

4. Mr. S. Chakraborty, an accomplished orator and Indian journalist.

5. Mr. R. S. Mallic, a well known philanthropist, whose donation started the national university of Calcutta.

6. Mr. B. Nag, the president of a volunteer organization

7. Mr. Guha, the president of a labour union.

8. Mr. Chattergee, the president of an ethical association, Barisal.

9. Mr. S. Basu, the president of the anti-circular society.

These are the men that the government has selected for solitary confinement for an indefinite period.

The startling sentence of ten years' imprisonment to Mr. Pillai, the president of Shadeshhi Steam Navigation Co., for attending an alleged seditious lecture, and fifteen years' imprisonment to Mr. H. Varma, for expressing sympathy with Mr. A. Ghose, the Mazzini of India, the president of the National University, when he was arrested in a conspir-

acy case at Alipur—all these and a hundred other cases have made the nationalistic movement secret and conspirative.

It is now very difficult to gauge the amount of real unrest and discontent in the country. On the surface, there is no sign of impending storm, but from different sources reports are coming that there is a strong feeling against the British government, and that a large amount of arms and ammunition have been smuggled into the country. Lord Morley's reform proposals have been received with absolute indifference, for the official members in the viceregal and legislative councils will be in the majority and the nominated members will be under the government influence. So they will be bound to look out for the interest of the government, that is—the British people. But whatever be the defect of Lord Morley's reforms, if they had been granted five years ago they would have been received by millions of the Indian people with welcome. But now India, from Cape Comorin to Peshwar, is one seething mass of unrest and discontentment. The doctrines of Baren and Upen, the twin brothers of Indian Revolution, have been too deeply inculcated in the nation. The calm indifference and the majestic challenge with which more than half a dozen young patriots have died on the British scaffold in the course of a few months, have made the situation more grave and serious. If any importance is to be attached to the utterances of Baren and Ullus, when death sentence was passed on them for attempting to wage war against the British government, then the Indian political sky seems to be overcast with storms and clouds.